

Message Text

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SUBJ: KEY ELECTORAL CONTESTS

REF: COLOMBO 2491

1. SUMMARY: THERE ARE CERTAIN CONTESTS WHICH WILL BE WATCHED WITH SPECIAL INTEREST IN THURSDAY'S ELECTION. THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MIGHTY IS ALWAYS INTRIGUING; SOME CONTESTS WILL GIVE A PRELIMINARY INDICATION OF THE ELECTORAL STRENGTH OF SUCH GROUPS AS THE NON-TRADITIONAL YOUNG LEFT, THE INSURGENTS, AND THE RADICAL TAMILS. END SUMMARY.

2. WHATEVER THE ELECTION OUTCOME JULY 21, THERE ARE CERTAIN CONSTITUENCIES WHERE THE RESULTS WILL BE WATCHED WITH SPECIAL INTEREST FOR THE TRENDS THEY PORTEND AND FOR THE INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITIES WHO WILL STAND AND FALL BY THE WHIMS OF THE VOTERS. A SEARCHING LOOK WILL BE TAKEN AT THE MARGINS OF VICTORY IN THE THREE BANDARANAIKE CONSTITUENCIES -- ATTANAGALLE (PRIME MINISTER SIRIMAVO), DOMPE (FINANCE MINISTER FELIX DIAS), AND NUWARA ELIYA (THE PM'S SON ANURA). ONLY A REAL UNP LANDSLIDE COULD DEFEAT THE PM IN HER WELL-NOURISHED AND CARED FOR ELECTORATE; FELIX WOULD HAVE TO BE JUDGED THE FAVORITE

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IN DOMPE IF ONLY BECAUSE HE WON A PHENOMENAL 77 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN 1970, BUT HE AND HIS ABRASIVE WIFE LAKSHMI, HAVE MANAGED TO ANTAGONIZE A LOT OF CONSTITUENTS IN THE PAST SEVEN YEARS. ANURA IS LIKELY TO WIN IN NUWARA ELIYA BECAUSE OF THE MULTI-MEMBER NATURE OF THE ELECTORATE; THREE M.P.'S WILL BE ELECTED AND ANURA IS SET TO BE THE LOW MAN ON THAT TOTEM POLE. (NUWARA ELIYA IS ALSO THE SCENE OF AN UNDERSTATED BUT HARD-

FOUGHT CAMPAIGN BETWEEN GAMINI DISSANAYAKZ, A YOUNG POTENTIAL LEADER OF THE UNP, AND S. THONDAMAN, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DEPRESSED INDIAN TAMIL COMMUNITY, TO WIN THE PRESTIGIOUS POSITION OF FIRST M.P.). SITTING CABINET MEMBERS HAVE HAD A BAD TRACK RECORD AT PAST ELECTIONS AND ACCORDINGLY THERE ARE FEW TODAY WHO ARE FACING EASY CONTESTS ON THEIR HOME GROUND. THEY HAVE NOTABLY STAYED CLOSE TO HOME THIS CAMPAIGN. THE RESULTS WILL BE VISIBLE FRIDAY IN SUCH CONSTITUENCIES AS MEDAWACHIYA (DEPUTY LEADER OF THE SLFP MAITHRIPALA SENANAYAKE HAS NEVER BEEN DEFEATED AND SHOULD BE SECURE IN THE PARTY'S NORTH CENTRAL PROVINCE HEARTLAND), YATINUWARA (AGRICULTURE MINISTER HECTOR KOBBEKADUWA BROUGHT THE NATION LAND REFORM AND EXPECTS TO BE THANKED FOR IT AT THIS ELECTION), AND DIVULAPITIAY (DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER LAKSHMAN JAYAKODY IS SAID TO BE IN SOME TROUBLE WITH THE RITUALLY DEPRESSED BUT POLITICALLY INFLUENTIAL BATHGAMA CASTE).

3. THE UNITED NATIONAL PARTY, SUPREMELY CONFIDENT THROUGHOUT THE CAMPAIGN, SHOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE ELECTING ITS LEADER J.R. JAYEWARDENE IN COLOMBO WEST BUT WOULD LIKE A WHOPPING MAJORITY. THE MARGIN IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT IN THE THREE-MEMBER COLOMBO CENTRAL ELECTORATE WHERE DEPUTY LEADER R. PREMADASA'S MARGIN OF VICTORY HAS PROBABLY BEEN CUT BY THE ENTRY OF AN INDIAN TAMIL CANDIDATE S. SELLASAMY IN THE RACE. BUT SELLASAMY'S MAIN IMPACT MAY FALL ON VETERAN PARLIAMENTARIAN AND COMMUNIST PARTY LEADER PIETER KEUNEMAN WHO COULD WELL LOSE HIS FIRST LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ELECTION EVER EITHER TO SELLASAMY OR, MORE LIKELY, TO SLFP CANDIDATE HALIM ISHAK. ANOTHER IMPORTANT RACE FOR THE UNP IS RATMALANA WHERE THE PARTY HAS PUT UP ITS BRIGHTEST NEW STAR LALITH ATHULATHMUDALI, HIGH-POWERED LAWYER AND PARTY THEORETICIAN, WHO HOPES TO BE THE MINISTER OF FINANCE IN A UNP GOVERNMENT. IF SITTING LSSP'ER VIVIENNE GUNAWARDENA, NOT LIKELY TO BE RETURNED, DOES WELL ENOUGH TO SPLIT THE ANTI-UNP VOTE, LALITH MAY FULFILL HAS HOPED-FOR DESTINY. THE RACE IN KANDY, GENERALLY A UNP ELECTORATE, IS ONE OF THE FEW WHERE TWO SENIOR PARTYMEN CONFRONT EACH OTHER. FORMER UNP HEALTH MINISTER E.L. SENANAYAKE IS GIVEN THE EDGE OVER DEPUTY AGRICULTURE MINISTER H.M. NAVARATNE, WHO SWITCHED CONSTITUENCIES AT THE LAST MINUTE, ANTAGONIZING MANY PARTY SUPPORTERS AND PROMPTING THE WOULD-BE SLFP CANDIDATE TO RUN AS AN INDEPENDENT.

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4. THERE ARE FEW REALLY SAFE SEATS FOR THE LEFT LEADERS. SOME LONG-TIME RED SEATS CAN PROBABLY BE SALVAGED BUT LSSP'ERS N.M. PERERA, COLVIN DE SILVA, AND LESLIE GUNAWARDENA ARE FIGHTING HARD IN THEIR HOME AREAS. COMMUNIST LEADERS FACE THE SAME PLIGHT. IT IS LEFT TO THE YOUNGER RADICALS, NOT SO DISCREDITED BY PARTICIPATION IN MRS. BANDARANAIKE'S UNITED FRONT GOVERNMENT, TO PROVE AT THIS ELECTION THAT THE LEFT HAS AN INDEPENDENT FUTURE IN SRI LANKAN PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS. VASUDEVA NANAYAKKARA, THE MOST PROMINENT YOUNG LSSP'ER, WAS SUSPENDED FROM THE PARTY AND IS RUNNING AS AN INDEPEDNENT IN EHeliYAGODA BUT WITH NO ULF OPPOSITION. A VICTORY WILL JUSTIFY HIS DEFINANCE OF THE PARTY'S ELDERLY LEADERS.

5. SOME VETERANS OF THE 1971 INSURRECTION WILL BE CONTESTING THIS ELECTION, FOUR UNDER THE BANNER OF THE JANATHA VIMUKTI PERAMUNA (JVP) AND MORE UNDER THE UNITED LEFT FRONT UMBRELLA. A VICTORY BY ANY ONE OF THEM WOULD BE SURPRISING; PERHAPS THE ONLY REAL POSSIBILITY WOULD BE A WIN BY G.I.D. DHARMASEKERA, CONTESTING THE DOUBLE-MEMBER SEAT OF BERUWELA AS A ULF CANDIDATE. DHARMASEKERA HOWEVER IS CONSIDERED A BETRAYER OF THE JVP. HE IS ALLEGED TO HAVE DELIBERATELY JUMPED THE GUN ON THE INSURGENCY BY A MONTH BY ORGANIZING THE MARCH 1971 ATTACK ON THE U.S. EMBASSY; THAT SERVED TO ALERT THE SECURITY FORCES TO WHAT WAS COMING.

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6. THE TAMIL COMMUNITY IS BEING ASKED FOR THE FIRST TIME TO ENDORSE THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF A SEPARTE NATION IN THE NORTH AND EAST. THE DEGREE OF SUCCESS OF THE 23 CANDIDATES OF THE TAMIL UNITED LIBERATION FRONT WILL BE AN IMPORTANT INDICATOR OF THE DEPTH OF THE SEPARATIST FEELING IN THE COMMUNITY. (THE FIGURE OF 23 CANDIDATES, ONE LESS THAN PREVIOUSLY RE-

PORTED, ARISES FROM THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE ELECTION IN ONE EAST COAST CONSTITUENCY (REFTEL.) PARTY LEADER A. AMIRTHALINGAM IS CONTESTING AN INDEPENDENT I KANKESANTURAI, THE ELECTORATE OF THE PARTY'S REVERED DEAD LEADER. PROMINENT YOUTH LEADER AND POET KASI ANANTHAN, JAILED DURING MUCH OF THE MERGENCY PERIOD FOR SEPARATIST ACTIVITIES, IS INVOLVED IN A HOTLY-CONTESTED RACE IN THE TWO-MEMBER BATTICALOA SEAT. HE FACES THE CONTROVERSIAL EDUCATION MINISTER BADIUDDIN MAHMUD AND THE SITTING SLFP MEMBER AND MUST COMPETE FOR TAMIL VOTES WITH HIS PARTY COMRADE AND SITTING TULF'ER C. RAJADURAI (WHO OPPOSED HIS ENTRY INTO THE RACE IN THE FIRST PLACE). THE UNP HAS PUT UP JUST ONE CANDIDATE, A MOSLEM, WHO WITH ALL THE VOTE SPLITTING AMONG THE OTHER TWO PARTIES SHOULD HAVE A GOOD SHOT AT ONE OF THE SEATS HIMSELF.

7. SRI LANKA'S MOST POLITICALLY ASTUTE CONTITUENCY APPEARS TO BE RATNAPURA, WHICH HAS MANAGED TO VOTE FOR THE WINNING PARTY IN EVERY ELECTION INDEPENDENCE IN 1947. THE SITTING M.P. IS SLFP DEFECTOR NANDA ELLAWALA RUNNING ON THE ULF TICKET; THE CONSTITUENCY THIS YEAR SEEMS TO BE THE CLASSIC SPOILER CASE -- THE PERSONALLY STRONG ULF CANDIDATE WILL SPLIT THE UNITED FRONT VOTE OF 1970 AND EITHER WIN HIMSELF OR THROW THE CONTEST TO THE UNP.
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